

Ecopoetry in Translation: A Critical Rendition of Ulrike Almut Sandig's "so I've heard it said"

Research Thesis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation  
*with research distinction in German* in the undergraduate  
colleges of the Ohio State University

by

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December 2018

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## Introduction

Only recently have scholars begun to discuss the implications of the Anthropocene for the translation of literature, introducing a new practice and study of ecotranslation. The Anthropocene is a term popularized by Paul Crutzen which describes the current epoch as one in which human activity gains a significant, largely negative impact on geology and ecosystems. In view of this literary scholars believe they can transform this dominant anthropocentric culture; a culture which they believe is responsible for the ongoing ecological destruction, including climate change and loss of biodiversity. Ecotranslation is understood as translation from an ecological perspective, which according to authors Badenes and Coisson can mean the following: retranslating literature where nature had been previous silenced in translation, translating texts that present an ecological worldview, and translating non-ecological texts into ecological ones (360). In addition to this Michael Cronin puts forth that ecotranslation should transmit ecological perspectives between cultures (4).

My research project is an exercise in ecotranslation which combines an introductory ecopoetic interpretation of the poem “so habe ich sagen gehört” (so I’ve heard it said) by German author Ulrike Almut Sandig, with an analysis of an existing translation of the poem, and a commentary of my ecotranslation process and result. After analyzing the poem and discovering the prevalence of ecological themes I wanted to see how the existing translation handled these themes, and if a ecotranslation of the poem would differ from the existing one.

I chose a poem that can be interpreted as ecopoetic for this project because I think that the retention of ecological themes found in a source text is valuable in translation, and I wanted to discover if there was validity to an ecological approach to translation. Sandig’s poem can, as I argue, be interpreted as ecopoetic, following the definition by Zemanek and Rauscher. They

define ecopoetry as a subcategory of nature poetry that meets one or more of the following criteria: 1) a thematic treatment of nature; 2) presentation of nature as a complex ecosystem; 3) an eco- or biocentric worldview; 4) the articulation of environmental concerns; 5) or the formal representation of ecological principles like interdependence and cyclic structures (97). I find through analysis that “so habe ich sagen gehört” contains four of these features: a main motif of a forest; a deemphasis of the poetic subject; the presentation of environmental concerns, specifically biodiversity loss; and a list-like structure which mimics the scientific classification of nature. My ecological translation aims to retain these features, while also bringing them into a North American ecological and cultural context (Cronin 4). Through comparison of the existing translation of this poem and my ecotranslation, I discovered differences between the two, and I discuss how these differences affect the reading of the poem.

## **Ecopoetics and Ecotranslation**

### *Ecopoetic theory*

As I mentioned in the introduction Zemanek and Rauscher define ecopoetry as being a subcategory of nature poetry that meets one or more specific criteria regarding its approach and attitude towards nature, mainly being that the worldview portrayed not be anthropocentric (97). The difference between ecopoetry and forms of nature poetry as seen in other periods of literary history such as the romantic, is as Axel Goodbody says, a result of the loss of humanity’s vision of the world where they held the central position, which resulted in human emotion being projected on to the landscape (299). Goodbody says that ecopoetry in the Anthropocene needs to be a practice of poetry that does not make this projection but is in contrast biocentric and gives

appropriate interest to all things and considers the simultaneous physical existence of the human and non-human.

Ecopoetry in practice is poetry that gives nature a voice, rather than superimposing a human one on to it. If Goodbody is right about ecopoetry, the question for ecotranslation then becomes, more specifically, how this ecological component of poetry can be translated.

### *Ecotranslation theory*

The relationship between ecology and translation is multifaceted, encompassing many disciplines and perspectives. In recent years scholars have begun discussing how a theory of ecotranslation could be defined, among them Guillermo Badenes, Josefina Coisson, and Michael Cronin. In their above-mentioned essay Badenes and Coisson claim that when ecology and translation are combined ecotranslation is created, which involves the intersection of not only different languages as in any translation, but also of cultural differences in ecological concern and thought (357). According to Michael Cronin's *Eco-translation: Translation and Ecology in the Age of the Anthropocene*, the separation of humanities, social sciences, and natural, physical sciences is not sustainable. This is so, he claims, since it is no longer possible to ignore the relationship between the non-human and the human without continued damage to the environment. He proposes that the relationship between non-human nature and humanity has changed drastically through industry, technology, and agriculture. This change cannot therefore be left unaddressed if humans want a healthy relationship with the world around them. He proposes that if a new perspective is required of humanity, this will affect all of human activity, including translation (Cronin 3). Building on the insights of these three authors, I propose that there are two specific challenges in ecotranslation. The first lies in attempting to rethink how

translation should be approached considering the ecological changes impressed upon nature by humanity. As I said in my introduction, because of the Anthropocene the weight of finding a solution to how humans approach environmental issues and speak about the environment, is in part on the shoulders of the humanities, which includes the translation of literary texts. The second challenge lies in how cultural ecological knowledge and concern can be transferred interculturally in literary texts.

Translation attempts to transfer meaning through the changing of words, with the goal being that the meaning remains the same while only the words themselves change. Unfortunately however, language is often more complex than this and meaning is lost. Maria Tymoczko says that

translators must make choices: they cannot capture all aspects of a source text, and their choices establish a place of enunciation, as well as a context of affiliation... They must make choices about what to translate and what to silence. Translation is thus a metonymic process (453).

In light of this perspective, in this project I chose to establish a focus on ecology since I assert that it is also important in the source text, which is why I chose to complete a ecotranslation. But at the same time I also attempt to minimize losses in other aspects of the poem such as sound and visual structure.

As mentioned in my introduction according to Badenes and Coisson, who focus on literary translation, ecotranslation can be approached in three different ways as

Rereading and retranslating literary works where nature, having its own voice in the source text, was silenced in translation; translating works that present an ecological cosmovision and have not yet been translated; and translating via manipulation works

that do not originally present an ecological vision with the aim of creating a new, now ecological, text (360).

In the first approach to ecotranslation they propose there could be an existing translation of a text, in which the source text gives nature a voice, sometimes this is done in a way that can be perceived as ecological, including texts written before the concept of ecology in literature existed. They suggest that when a critical analysis of a translation reveals that it has silenced nature, then this observation results in a decision to retranslate the source text. Behind this decision is the goal to produce a translation more true to the portrayal of nature in the source text. The second version of ecotranslation according to these authors is when an ecological worldview is perceived in a literary text that has not yet been translated, prompting a translator to approach the text with this worldview in mind. This approach is similar to the first, since both come to the source text with an ecological worldview in mind. But rather than being critical of an existing translation of a text that is sensitive to nature, this version is an affirmation of the aspects of ecology already present in the original text. The third, and final version of ecotranslation is critical, like the first, but the criticism is not directed against an existing translation, but against the text to be translated. Badenes and Coisson thus promote the manipulation of what they perceive as a nonecological literary text in order to transform it, via translation, into one that is ecological.

In their essay, Badenes and Coisson illustrate and explore all three of their proposed versions of ecotranslation through case studies. Here, I will examine their exploration of rereading and retranslation completed through an analysis of Leonor Acevedo de Borges translation into Spanish of an excerpt of Katherine Mansfield's "At the Bay" (1912). I evaluate

their analysis of “At the Bay” because I believe it is closest to what I attempt to achieve in my translation of “so habe ich sagen gehört, which is also a critique of an existing English translation. I assert that my reinterpretation and retranslation of the poem can perhaps do more justice to the ecological themes of the source text than the existing translation.

Badenes and Coisson’s critique of the Spanish translation of the Mansfield short story is that it ignores the voice of nature expressed in the original (361). The focus of the critique is on word choice, especially on the effects of the connotations that words carry for readers, the sound patterns, and how certain words connect to human agency. The first example is how the word “paddock” is translated. In Mansfield’s original the section reads “The sandy road was gone and the paddocks and the bungalows the other side of it,” (Badenes 361). All of the things mentioned represent a manmade or artificial object which nature, in this case mist, obstructs from view (Badenes 361). However, Acevedo de Borges translates “paddock” into the Spanish “pastos” (grass), which, according to Badenes and Coisson, diminishes the ubiquitousness of nature in the text, since “paddock” is a manmade fenced-in field, and in contrast the word “grass” is natural referring to a grassy field or meadow. Nature in the source text makes manmade constructions vanish but in this translation natural landforms (grass) and artificial constructions are mixed together, which takes power away from nature (Badenes 362). Another word choice that they address is for the Spanish verb “chapotear” (to splash) which in two out of its three definitions indicates the sound made by a hand or foot moving through water and “... the human hand becomes an uncalled-for-presence.” (Badenes 362). Badenes and Coisson suggest that the Spanish verb “rizar” which does not imply human interference, may convey more accurately than “chapotear” the image in the source text. (363).



In reviewing Badenes and Coisson's process of retranslation of "At the Bay" I find that my efforts in translation of Sandig's "so habe ich sagen gehört" following this view of ecotranslation in the method of retranslation because there is an existing translation of the poem. In my attempt to retranslate Sandig's poem my main focus is on the identification and retention of ecological aspects and to make sure the voice of nature found in the source poem is also audible in my translation (Badenes & Coisson 360).

I chose retranslation since I find through analysis that the existing published translation by Dr. Karen Leeder does not contain an ecological focus. At the same time however, I find that I cannot make the claim that nature is "silenced in translation," in regards to Leeder's translation. Yet, I do believe that ecological concerns and perspectives present in the source text can be better transmitted through a translation with an ecological focus, rather than one generally focused on semantic and syntactical issues, as Leeder's seems to be.

Leeder's translation appear to have this focus since it emphasizes word for word equivalents. By this I mean that the word choices seem to consistently be for the exact English equivalents that I found when looking up a word in an established bilingual dictionary like Langenscheidt. While this literal translation method can be efficient and accurate, often times it leaves room for error, and risks lack of nuance. This especially comes to the forefront when evaluating the ecological potential of a piece of writing, as I discuss later in my commentary on the translations.

Michael Cronin's definition of ecotranslation focuses on the importance of place for an ecologically conscious translation, demanding from the translator an "awareness of the place sensitivity of language and usage as way of globally allowing for the flourishing of creativity and difference" (Cronin 15). The alternative being the homogenization of translated language. This

means that languages rather than maintaining differences would become one, and may eventually, if carried out to fruition, result in the loss of significant distinction between languages. Cronin also discusses resilience of language where he raises the question: “Is there a sense in which too much translation uniformizes and that the only way of safeguarding difference is not more translation but less[?]” (17). Circulation of language is of such high value in a globalized world, that at a certain point words that are difficult to translate start to be viewed as something to be avoided. (Cronin 17) This can be seen in attempts to make texts not feel foreign so that they are easily digestible to their audience. This is done despite the fact that the text is translated and is therefore inherently foreign.

I find these observations from Cronin useful regarding the term “Braunkohledörfer” in Sandig’s poem because it is a geographically restricted ecological concern. My goal in its translation is to respect its place sensitivity by ensuring the clarity of its meaning. I chose to leave untranslated, preferring to keep its specificity intact.

## Ecotranslation of a contemporary poem

Ulrike Almut Sandigs Gedicht aus ihrer Sammlung *Dickicht* (2011)

hab sagen gehört, es gäb einen Ort  
für alle verschwundenen Dinge, wie

die verschiedenen Sorten von Äpfeln  
die Clowns und die Götter, darunter

auch jenen guten Gott von Manhattan  
Karl-Marx-Stadt und Konstantinopel

Benares und Bombay und die Namen  
von zu vielen Braunkohledörfern

befänden sich, so habe ich sagen gehört  
in der Mitte des Weißtannenwalds

der jede Schallwelle schluckt, der Ort  
wär, **so habe ich sagen gehört**  
auf keiner gültigen Karte verzeichnet.

### *Biographie*

Ulrike Almut Sandig wurde 1979 in Großenhain geboren, wuchs in Nauwalde in einem Pfarrhaushalt auf, und lebt in Berlin. Sie brach ihr Journalistikstudium ab, und nach zwei längeren Aufenthalten in Indien schloss sie ihr Magisterstudium 2005 in Religionswissenschaft und moderner Indologie ab. 2010 erhielt sie ihr Diplom vom Deutschen Literaturinstitut Leipzig mit Diplom ab (Lyrikline.de). Mit der Autorin Marlen Pelný gründete sie 2001 *augenpos*, Sie veröffentlichten Texte auf Plakaten, Flyern, und Gratispostkarten im öffentlichen Raum (Sandig).

Sandig veröffentlichte vier Gedichtbände (*Zunder*, 2005, *Streumen*, 2007, *Dickicht*, 2011, *ich bin ein Feld voller Raps verstecke die Rehe und leuchte wie dreizehn Ölgemälde übereinandergelegt*, 2016) und den Erzählband *Flamingos* (2010). Gemeinsam mit Marlen Pelný veröffentlichte sie außerdem zwei Alben vertonter Gedichte *der tag an dem alma kamillen kaufte* (2006) und *Märzwald* (2011) (Sandig). Ihre Lesungen sind auch Sprechperformances an dem Platz zwischen Lied und Sprache (Lyrikline.de). Deswegen es ist klar, dass der Ton eines gelesenen Gedichts ihr wichtig ist.

### *Analyse*

Das Gedicht „so habe ich sagen gehört“ von Ulrike Almut Sandig wurde erstmals 2011 in ihrem Gedichtband *Dickicht* © Schöffling & Co. Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH, Frankfurt am Main veröffentlicht. Es erschien auch in *Lyrik im Anthropozän* (2016) veröffentlicht. Dieser Publikationsort unterstützt meine Interpretation des Gedichts als Ökolyrik.

Das Gedicht sieht gerade und eben aus. Alle Zeilen haben gleiche Länge. Bevor man es liest, es scheint, als ob das Gedicht ordentlich ist. Am Ende des Gedichts steht das Wort „Karte“; eine Karte zeigt etwas. Durch Analyse finde ich, was die Karte dieses Gedichts zeigt. Ich schlage vor, dass das Gedicht wahrscheinlich selbstreflexiv gelesen werden kann. Vielleicht bezieht sich das Wort „Karte“ auf das Gedicht selbst.

Die Struktur des Gedichts führt zu einer Liste. Eine Liste von den Namen der verschwundenen Dinge. Man kann sagen, dass das wie eine Taxonomie von Namen ist. Das Gedicht besteht aus sechs Strophen und enthält fünf Zweizeiler und ein Schlussterzett. Innerhalb des Terzetts steht ein fettgedruckter Nebensatz „so habe ich sagen gehört“, der als Titel gelesen

werden kann. Viele von der Zeilen haben Enjambement, das Kohäsion zwischen den Zeilen herstellt.

Die zentrale Idee des Gedichts ist einer Ort, wo verschwundenen Dinge sind, der auf keinen Karte aufgeführt ist. Obwohl diese Dinge nicht auf eine Karte sind, sie im Gedicht diskutiert werden. Diese verschwundenen Dinge sind keine Gegenstände, sondern Namen von Gegenständen. Dieser Thema ist Verlust von Identität. Nach Karin Fellner ist Verlust die Schrumpfung der lebenden Welt. Sie spricht davon, wenn sie „Von älteren Landschaften bleiben nur Namen“ sagt. Im Gedicht davon gibt es zwei Arten: Namen von Dingen, die nicht mehr existieren, und Namen von Dingen, die noch existieren. Die Dinge, die nicht mehr existieren, sind aufgelistet, wie die Apfelsorten, die Götter, die Clowns und die Braunkohledörfer. Jeder Gegenstand hatte einen Name, und der Name existiert noch, aber heute der Gegenstand oder die Person existiert selber nicht mehr. Im Folgenden diskutiere ich die spezifischen Beispiele im Gedicht.

In Deutschland gibt es in Mitte 19. Jahrhunderts etwa 2.000 Apfelsorten, aber jetzt werden nur noch einige dieser Sorten angebaut. Fast niemand kennt die Namen von historischen Sorten, und manche sind sogar ausgestorben wie der Deutsche Goldpepping, und der Holsteiner Rosenhäger.

Die genannten Götter sind vielleicht griechische Götter, weil wir bei vielen Göttern schnell an die griechischen Götter denken, wenigstens im westlichen Kulturraum. Außerdem gibt es vielleicht intertextuelle Bezüge. Die moderne deutsche Lyrik, die im späten 18. Jhd. entsteht, nennt häufig die griechischen Götter einfach nur “Götter” (Hölderlin, Schiller, Goethe). Namen griechischer Götter sind auch interessant, weil die Römer ihre Namen veränderten, als sie die Götter übernehmen. Zum Beispiel der griechische Zeus wird zu dem römischen Jupiter,

Aphrodite wird zu Venus, Artemis wird zu Diana usw. Die Religion der Germanen hatte auch viele Götter, wie Odin, Donner, Tyr, Frigg und Fulla die heutzutage nicht so bekannt sind. Egal aus welchen Religion sie kommen, alte Götter sind fast immer mit natürlichen Phänomenen verbunden.

Die Namen ehemals berühmter Clowns sind heutzutage auch nicht mehr bekannt. Zum Beispiel waren Oleg Popov, Dimitri, Coco, Silvers, Swede Johnson usw. früher in 18 und 19 Jhd. alle sehr berühmt. Aber jetzt sind fast alle alten bekannten Clowns schon gestorben, und es gibt fast keine neuen.

Braunkohledörfer sind der letzte Gegenstand auf der Liste im Gedicht, der nicht mehr existiert. Braunkohledörfer sind ein speziell bestimmtes deutsches Phänomen. Die sind Dörfer, die zerstört werden oder worden sind, weil das Land, auf das sie gebaut wurden, wird gefördert. Diese Dörfer sind "Braunkohledörfer" weil sie wegen des Braunkohleabbaus zerstört worden sind. In den USA und Großbritannien gibt es keine Dörfer, die aus solchen Gründen zerstört werden.

Im Vergleich dazu sind die Namen von Städten aufgelistet, die heute noch alle existieren, aber deren Namen sind verändert wurden. Zum Beispiel heißt Karl-Marx-Stadt heute Chemnitz, Konstantinopel heißt Istanbul, Benares heißt Varansi, und Bombay heißt Mumbai. Am Ende erklärt der Sprecher des Gedichts, dass der Ort, wo diese Namen vielleicht sind, sei inmitten eines Waldes, und alle Schallwellen würden dort „geschluckt“. Also zum Schluss alle Namen sind zerstört oder geschluckt.

Im Gedicht betont das Verstecken des Titels das Thema von Namen, besonders die Frage was ein Name bedeutet sowie die Beziehung zwischen den Namen und den Dingen auf die sich

beziehen. Genau wie der Ort vielleicht inmitten eines Waldes ist, ist der Titel inmitten des Gedichts. Der funktioniert als Visualisierung den versteckenden Ort.

Im ersten zweizeiligen Strophe haben beide Vers je zehn Silben, „hab sagen gehört, es gäb einen Ort/ für alle verschwundenen Dinge, wie“. Jeder folgende Zweizeiler hat zehn Silben in der ersten, und neun in der zweiten Zeile. In der letzten Strophe haben die erste drei Zeilen neun Silben und die letzte hat elf. Dieser spezifische Versaufbau gibt dem Gedicht den Anschein von Ordnung und Regelmäßigkeit.

Das Satzteil „hab sagen gehört“ wird dreimal wiederholt. Es ist ein Refrain, und fast wie eine Mantra. Diese Wiederholung gibt dem Klang des Gedichts einen bestimmten Rhythmus. Die unbekannte Sprecherin des Gedichts wiederholt Informationen, die sie nur „sagen gehört hat“. Dadurch entsteht eine Distanz nicht nur zwischen den Sprechern und dem Inhalt des im Gedicht Gesagten, sondern auch zwischen den Lesern. Wiederholung ist ein traditionelles Element der Lyrik, folglich klingt die bekannt. Diese spezifische Form der Wiederholung klingt nach einer Sage oder einer Fabel. Das Satzteil „ich habe sagen gehört“ erinnert an „Es war einmal...“ wie „Schneewittchen“ oder „Frau Trude“ von der Brüder Grimm. Aber es ist anders, wenn man „ich“ sagt, dann wird die Aussage persönlicher. Jedoch glaube ich, dass die Wiederholung ein bisschen auch wie eine Märchen klingt. Das passt gut zum Wald im Gedicht, der in Märchen eine wichtige Rolle spielt.

Auch werden Laute wiederholt wie „rt“ in Wörter wie „gehört“, „Ort“, „Sorten“, und „Karte“ und „g“ in Wörter wie „gehört“, „gäb“, „Götter“, „guten“, „Gott“, und „gültigen.“ Das Wiederholung von Lauten gibt dem Gedicht ein Tempus und einen Rhythmus. Dies Muster von Lauten ist interessant, weil die wiederholten Laute plosiv sind. Das heißt sie blockieren den

Atemluftstrom im Hals. Diese Laute decken sich mit der Zeile „der jede Schallwelle schluckt.“

Die Leserin „schluckt“ fast ihre eigene Worte als sie das Gedicht liest, weil die Laute plosiv sind.

Manche der im Gedicht genannten Dinge sind aus der Natur, wie Äpfel und der Weißtannenwald, andere sind Orte wie die Städte, und manchen auch sind auch mythische oder fiktive Personen wie die Clowns und die Götter und der Gott von Manhattan der auf Ingeborg Bachmanns gleichnamigen Hörspiel anzuspielen scheint.. Aber obwohl sie aus sehr verschiedenen Kategorien kommen, werden alle dieser Dinge zusammengebracht. Obwohl diese Dinge mit einander zusammengehängt sind, glaube ich nicht, dass sie alle gleich wichtig sind.

Ich finde, die größte Frage des Gedichts ist: wem spricht der Sprecherin an? Es ist selbstverständlich, dass die Sprecherin des Gedichts etwas sagen gehört hat, aber es ist nicht klar wer hat etwas gesagt. Es ist auch interessant, dass das Gedicht von Biodiversitätsverlust spricht, aber niemals sagt das ich "du". In anderem Wörter es gibt kein Ansprechen des Lesers. Sehr oft Ecoliteratur verlangt der Leser und er wird verantwortlich gemacht (Goodbody 295). Aber in diesem Fall verlangt das Gedicht vom Leser nichts\_explicit, es sagt einfach Fakten aus.



Existing translation by Karen Leeder:	Original:
I've been told there is a place for all vanished things, like	hab sagen gehört, es gäb einen Ort für alle verschwundenen Dinge, wie
the old varieties of apple clowns and gods and among	die verschiedenen Sorten von Äpfeln die Clowns und die Götter, darunter
them even that good God of Manhattan Karl-Marx-Stadt and Constantinople	auch jenen guten Gott von Manhattan Karl-Marx-Stadt und Konstantinopel
Benares and Bombay and the names of too many brown coal villages	Benares und Bombay und die Namen von zu vielen Braunkohledörfern
fetch up there, I've been told, in the thick of the silver fir wood	befänden sich, so habe ich sagen gehört in der Mitte des Weißtannenwalds
that swallows every sound wave, the place is, or <b>so I've been told</b> , not marked on any kind of map.	der jede Schallwelle schluckt, der Ort wär, <b>so habe ich sagen gehört</b> auf keiner gültigen Karte verzeichnet.

### *Existing translation analysis*

My analysis of Dr. Leeder's translation shows that she chose to use a literal approach in many cases throughout the poem. However, in a few cases she has employed a more free translation. I will go through a selection of these cases and discuss their effects on the reading of the poem, especially how the ecological elements in the poem are addressed in her translation.

The choice to translate the variations of the phrase "habe sagen gehört" as "I've been told" in English is interesting, because it places more agency on the unknown speaker. When an individual is told something, it indicates that whoever spoke to them was deliberate in this communication. However, I do not find such a sentiment in the German of the original. While both "tell" and "say" are accurate translations of "sagen", "tell" actually requires the sentence structure to be switched to passive. This effect is good in that it does distance the reader even further from the mysterious figure speaking, which as I said in my analysis of the poem is very

prominent in the source text. Yet at the same time it brings more attention to the speaker of the poem by making them the entire emphasis of the passive phrase. While a perfectly fine stylistic writing choice, as a translation choice I conclude that it does not contribute to retaining the overall meaning of the poem.

In the third line of the poem Leeder inserts the word “old” and decides to change the German dative plural of the word apple, “Äpfeln” to the singular, “apple,” while leaving “Sorten” translated as “varieties,” as plural. Any time a translator inserts a word, it should be done only if necessary to explain context, and while yes the varieties of apple are most likely old since they have vanished, but perhaps they are not old at all, the original poem does not divulge this information. Therefore I think it should be deemed irrelevant in the translation as well.

In the second and fourth lines of the poem the words “wie” and “darunter” help to create the emphasis on a list-like structure in the source text. Leeder translates them as “like” and “among” respectively, both of which are accurate equivalents of those words. These choices however, do not emphasize the list-like structure of the source text in the way that the German does.

There are two instances where I find Leeder’s translation choices to be quite free, by that I mean that the way in which she has rendered a specific phrase is completely different than in the source text. Free translation is the opposite of literal in that it commonly focuses not on equivalence of words, but of meaning. However, in order to make a free translation decision the translator must make assumptions about the intention of the source text. The two instances that I see Leeder do this are with the phrases “befänden sich” and “in der Mitte.” She chooses to translate “befänden sich” (to be located) as “fetch up there.” In the context of the poem this phrase seems to mean something along the lines of “way up there.” The second phrase “in der

Mitte” is rendered “in the thick.” I found this choice very clever since it refers back to the English title of the collection *In the Thick of It*, translated by Leeder who may also have chose the translation of the German title, *Dickicht*, which means “Thicket”. Yet at the same time, the German “in der Mitte” does not refer to *Dickicht*. Both of these translation choices are very poetic and sound beautiful, but I am not sure if what they add in style is worth the loss in the meaning they imply.

My literal translation:	Original:
I've heard it said, there's a place for all disappeared things, like	hab sagen gehört, es gäb einen Ort für alle verschwundenen Dinge, wie
the different sorts of apples the clowns and the gods, among	die verschiedenen Sorten von Äpfeln die Clowns und die Götter, darunter
which also that good god of Manhattan Karl-Marx-Stadt and Constantinople	auch jenen guten Gott von Manhattan Karl-Marx-Stadt und Konstantinopel
Benares and Bombay and the names of too many brown coal villages	Benares und Bombay und die Namen von zu vielen Braunkohledörfern
are situated, I've heard it said in the middle of a silver fir forest	befänden sich, so habe ich sagen gehört in der Mitte des Weißtannenwalds
it swallows every sound wave, the place would be, <b>so I've heard it said</b> not recorded on any valid map.	der jede Schallwelle schluckt, der Ort wär, <b>so habe ich sagen gehört</b> auf keiner gültigen Karte verzeichnet.

### *Literal translation commentary*

In preparation for my own ecological translation, I will now critique my literal translation within the context of my analysis. When approaching translation literally my objective is to produce a translation that most accurately represents each individual word and the context surrounding it. For all words in the poem I chose the first option that I came across in the dictionary<sup>1</sup>. My focus is less on meaning, or essence but on accuracy of word for word equivalence. That is the definition of literal translation that I use in my approach to Sandig's poem here. My main goal is to accurately represent the poem's semantical and syntactical features in English. In this translation I am unconcerned with retention of sound, ecological aspects and structural features.

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<sup>1</sup> All German word English equivalents from Langenscheidt German Dictionary (1993)

There are some cases where I find that the literal translation does the source text justice, for example with the variations of the phrase “hab sagen gehört.” In my literal translation I render this “I’ve heard it said.” I chose this because it is the closest semantically to the source text, but I find that it also retains what I recognize as a distancing from the speaker of the poem and whoever is saying the things that they hear. At the same time, it also preserves the personal feeling of closeness that the inclusion of “I” provides. As readers we receive information that has been “said” by someone we do not know, but through the first person perspective of the speaker of the poem.

Sometimes word for word choices were suitable options but at other times there was loss of original meaning, and unintended connotations. For example the word “Ort” translates directly to “place.” Place is defined as a “physical environment” or “physical surroundings”<sup>2</sup>. This definition is accurate but very general, more general I think than the meaning in the source text. The poem is focused on and entirely about this “place,” including a list of items found there and rumors of where it is located. So while “place” might be the most direct equivalent, it lacks any sort of specificity, since a place is merely a physical space with no defined borders or limits.

The word “wie” in the context of this poem is translated most literally as “like”, but this choice does not emphasize the list-like structure of the source poem by signaling that the list is beginning. While this choice is accurate in a literal sense it may not be the best choice. “Darunter” in the fourth line is another example, where the literal translation “among” can be implemented, but this does not highlight the list like structure in the way that “darunter” does in the source text.

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<sup>2</sup> All English word definitions from Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2018)

The most challenging word in the poem comes in line eight “Braunkohledörfern” (in the dative case, “Namen von + Dative case,” “the names of”) for which the word for word translation is “brown coal villages.” However, the concept that is expressed by the word is for villages that have been destroyed because they are atop land to be mined. For the average English speaker this is not common knowledge, and therefore the connotation associated with “brown coal villages” is a rural town where people who work in the mining industry live, not a town that has been completely annihilated. While appearing as a straightforward translation, expression “brown coal villages” turns out to be a misleading.

By first completing a literal translation, I can better recognize the places in the poem where I need to be most aware as I approach its translation from an ecological perspective. In the next section I try to rectify, through my ecotranslation, the moments where the literal translation lacks in communicating in full the ecological elements of the source poem, as well as some of the translation choices made by Karen Leeder.

My ecological translation	Original:
I've heard it said, there's a location for all disappeared things, such	hab sagen gehört, es gäb einen Ort für alle verschwundenen Dinge, wie
as for the different varieties of apples the clowns and the gods, under which	die verschiedenen Sorten von Äpfeln die Clowns und die Götter, darunter
also for that guten Gott von Manhattan Karl-Marx-Stadt and Constantinople	auch jenen guten Gott von Manhattan Karl-Marx-Stadt und Konstantinopel
Benares and Bombay and the names of too many Braunkohledörfer <sup>3</sup>	Benares und Bombay und die Namen von zu vielen Braunkohledörfern
are located, I've heard it said in the middle of a silver fir forest	befänden sich, so habe ich sagen gehört in der Mitte des Weißtannenwalds
which swallows every sound wave, the location would be, <b>so I've heard it said</b> not listed on any valid map.	der jede Schallwelle schluckt, der Ort wär, <b>so habe ich sagen gehört</b> auf keiner gültigen Karte verzeichnet.

### *Ecological translation commentary*

The first ecological aspect of importance in translating the poem is the word and concept of place. As I said earlier I find the literal translation of “Ort” to place as too general. I think a more ecological term would be “location” because it implies specificity of place. A location suggests the necessity of distinguishing features while the word place does not suggest this. I find the specificity fitting since near the end of the poem we learn that the lost things are perhaps “in the middle of a silver fir forest” which is a specific location. This results in the statement in the last line that the location cannot be found on any map even more jarring, since specific locations are marked on maps.

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<sup>3</sup> “Braunkohledörfer” are villages in Germany that have been destroyed in order that the land under them can be mined for brown coal.

Concerning the words “wie” and “darunter” I find that they express a list-like structure as I discussed in my analysis. Therefore, I chose not to use the more literal “like” and “among”, because they do not communicate as clearly the taxonomical character of the poem. Alternately I chose to render the words as “such as” and “under which” respectively because those English equivalents also highlight this taxonomical structure. By not only focusing on the content and meaning but also the structures through which it is communicated, this choice allows me to discover and retain additional layers of the poem’s ecological associations, in this case the reference to classification between living things.

The last aspect I discuss is way the word “Braunkohledörfer” is rendered in translation, because it has a large impact on the ecological position and tone of the text. As I have said previously the term refers to German villages that have been destroyed for mining. While on the one hand the term could simply be translated as “villages destroyed for mining,” I find this on the other hand this to be rather unpoetic. If I were to translate it this way the line would also become far too long in comparison to all the other ones, creating an unnecessary diversion away from the source poem, which contains an even visual structure. The source poem holds a strong ecological emphasis since it says that too many of the names of these villages have been lost, which implies that the poem is perhaps taking a political stand against their destruction. For these reasons I chose to leave the word untranslated and include a footnote explaining and defining it, rather than to risk the loss of meaning. If the poem is claiming that too many of the names of these villages have been destroyed, in turn then by not retaining this word I as a translator would further erase the names connected to the term.



Ecological translation	Existing translation	Original poem
I've heard it said, there's a location for all disappeared things, such	I've been told there is a place for all vanished things, like	hab sagen gehört, es gäb einen Ort für alle verschwundenen Dinge, wie
as for the different varieties of apples the clowns and the gods, under which	the old varieties of apple clowns and gods and among	die verschiedenen Sorten von Äpfeln die Clowns und die Götter, darunter
also for that guten Gott von Manhattan Karl-Marx-Stadt and Constantinople	them even that good God of Manhattan Karl-Marx-Stadt and Constantinople	auch jenen guten Gott von Manhattan Karl-Marx-Stadt und Konstantinopel
Benares and Bombay and the names of too many Braunkohledörfer	Benares and Bombay and the names of too many brown coal villages	Benares und Bombay und die Namen von zu vielen Braunkohledörfern
are located, I've heard it said in the middle of a silver fir forest	fetch up there, I've been told, in the thick of the silver fir wood	befänden sich, so habe ich sagen gehört in der Mitte des Weißtannenwalds
which swallows every sound wave, the location would be, <b>so I've heard it said</b> not listed on any valid map.	that swallows every sound wave, the place is, or <b>so I've been told</b> , not marked on any kind of map.	der jede Schallwelle schluckt, der Ort wär, <b>so habe ich sagen gehört</b> auf keiner gültigen Karte verzeichnet.

## Conclusion

In order to make the claim that ecotranslation is a valid approach to literary translation, there must be distinct differences between an ecotranslation and one without such a focus. I find in the previous analysis and commentary that comparing my proposed ecotranslation with Dr. Leeder's existing translation to reveal relevant differences.

One difference I found especially important was the difference in the translation of the phrase "hab sagen gehört", since it is also the title of the poem. Leeder chose in her translation to say "I've been told" while in contrast I say "I've heard it said." Since one of the ecological aspects observed in the source poem is deemphasis of the poetic subject I know that the choice made about this phrase is ecological. As I discussed in my commentary and analysis "told" implies intention of the person communicating, indicating that they desire for the speaker of the poem to hear what they say. While in contrast "heard" implies that something was communicated but not necessarily intentionally. I argue that "heard" is more ecological because it deemphasizes the lyrical-I and places emphasis onto the message the speaker has heard. The

word “told” is personal, while the word “heard” is impersonal and suggests a distant speaker hearing or even perhaps overhearing something being said.

Through completing this project I conclude that ecotranslation of a literary text can surely accomplish what it sets out to do, in that it retains the ecological aspects of its source text. Yet at the same time when a translator chooses to focus on one thing they sacrifice another. For example an ecotranslation of a poem might not be as musical as it has the potential to be, if the translator’s emphasis were on musicality rather than on ecological elements. As Tymoczko said in her essay on translation theory, all translators have choices, and in the process something is always silenced. Sandig’s poem displays an emphasis on ecological themes and therefore I find the choice of ecotranslation via retranslation to be appropriate since it focuses on the retention of what I find to be the most prominent characteristics of the poem.

In conclusion, I reflect on the question as to what extent human language can ever formulate an ecocentric point of view, as it expresses specific human relationships to the world, for instance in its sounds and the process of naming. I assert that no matter how ecological a translation is, it will inherently always rely on language and in turn humanity.

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